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"Quotes"

"There is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer. For there is no such flatterer as is a man's self."
~Francis Bacon

"A conversation is a dialogue, not a monologue."
~Truman Capote

"Excuses change nothing, but make everyone feel better."
~Mason Cooley

"His impact on me has been great. He's been a great friend and someone I have counted on for counsel a number of times in my career."
~Fran Dunphy

"Only if we can restrain ourselves is good conversation possible. Good talk rises upon much discipline."
~John Erskine

"I tried to use the questions and answers as an armature on which to build a sculpture of genuine conversation."
~Clifton Fadiman

"Listening well and answering well is one of the greatest perfections that can be obtained in conversation."
~Francois VI, Duc de La Rochefoucauld

"He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else."
~Benjamin Franklin

"The philosophy of the wisest man that ever existed is mainly derived from the act of introspection."
~William Godwin



It's All about ME!

Dear Friend,

It seems I was meant to write this message today!

As I fixed breakfast this morning, I flipped on the kitchen television. There, on my screen, appeared the full team of one of the morning network news shows. Around the table they all sat, chatting enthusiastically and laughing unashamedly about some pop culture topic.

Out of the blue, one of the anchors linked the discussion to something personal. And, the joking, but rather pointed, response from the second anchor indicated that it was no surprise that the conversation eventually would travel down a personal path. In essence, the message delivered was: *"We know, we know. It's always about YOU!"* (Ha, ha!)

Ooh! Did you feel the chill? I sure did.

The question is whether Anchor #1 did. This poor person, still laughing heartily, gave a playful elbow to the ribs of the offending colleague, and then wrapped up the segment. (I guess a *"Move it along."* was sent by the little inner-ear voice from the control room.)

I've intentionally left genders out this story so you can't shrug this off as simply being a "man-thing" or a "woman-thing". Nope, my friend, it's a "people-thing"! And, sometimes, it's a source of craziness *about* us for those *around* us.

So, in this month's edition of *EA Insights*, let's tackle the topic of *conversation hijackers*. With hope, it can help you end some of the madness for others...and for yourself.

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Are YOU Driving People Crazy? Part II: The Conversation Hijacker

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We began our "Are YOU Driving People Crazy?" series last month with a look at people who constantly wing it. In case you missed that edition, feel free to [read the article](#).

Let's continue on with a second potential blind spot -- conversation hijacking.

You know what a *hijack* is. It occurs when one person seizes or takes over something that belongs to someone else. Usually, we think of hijacking in connection with airplanes or other modes of transportation. The vehicle is taken over. We thought we were going in one direction, only to find ourselves headed someplace completely different.

All too often, though, conversations also fall victim to this dastardly deed.

Person 1:
"May I ask you a question?"

Person 2:
"Sure! What's up?"

Person 1:
"Well, I'm having a little trouble getting started on this assignment."

Person 2:
"Oh, I understand because when I was working on my piece of things last week, I had the same problem. I wasn't grasping what was going on, and it was throwing me for a loop. I seem to...."

Hijacked!

Now, on occasion, we all do this. Really, we do. However, when it is



habit...when conversations with you typically start out going in one direction and, nine times out of ten, end up pointed straight at you, then it's a problem. And, you're probably driving people crazy in the process.

So, what do you do? Here are some thoughts about how not to fall into conversation hijacking mode. (And, in case you're wondering, they spell out the word "hijack".)

Hear yourself.

Are you unsure about whether you're a conversation hijacker? You can ask others. (Note that you may, or may not, get an honest response.) Another effective means of getting your answer, however, is simply to hear yourself.

If you're able, while the conversation's still going on, pull back, and try to analyze what's happening. If this is too weird for you (and, don't feel badly if it is), do a rerun of the dialogue after the fact. Either way, try to assess yourself honestly. Was the original subject matter something related to the other person or some other topic but, by conversation end, you were mostly talking about yourself or something mostly of importance to you?

It may be a one-time occurrence. It may only be occasional. Then again, it may be habit. Give a listen to your conversation patterns to determine if you find yourself in hijack mode more often than not.

Identify when you do it.

The *when* is at the root of this part of the process.

Do you tend take over conversations when you're in a group of strangers?

Do you tend take over conversations when you're under stress?

Do you tend take over conversations when you're talking about a topic in your sweet spot?

Do you tend take over conversations...any time you have a conversation?

If you can begin to dissect *when* you move into hijack mode, this information will aid you in overcoming your challenge.

Justify-eth not.

Bottom line...no excuses. If you *justify* your actions (which is different from *understanding* your actions), no change will occur. Be prepared to keep driving folks bonkers. The only way to take meaningful steps toward the forward movement you're after is to admit (at least to yourself) what you're doing.

Active listening is essential.

Sometimes folks take over conversations because they desperately *want* to engage with someone else, but they don't know *how* to do it. Active listening can be a useful tool.

How might this look? Well, as someone else is talking, truly focus in on what he or she is saying. Don't think about how this applies to you; just listen to understand. Listen so that you can rephrase or summarize the gist of what was communicated. (And, you want to do this so that the speaker can clarify if your understanding is off in any way.) Asking open-ended questions also is helpful. This demonstrates your engagement and your desire to comprehend what is being shared. It involves you fully in the conversation...without making the conversation about you.

Confer with trusted counsel.

You may have a conversation hijacking blind spot, and/or you already may have identified this as a challenge area but need some help in turning it around. The assistance of trusted counsel can make a tremendous difference.

Notice that the key here is *trusted* counsel. You may find many people who will be willing to tell you that you're driving them crazy. However, what is likely to be more useful is someone who's willing to help you not only uncover the source of the lunacy but someone who's also willing to walk with you as you seek to turn it around. Trusted counsel helps you to see yourself as you are now, and it helps you to continue your growth into what you can become!

Keep working at it.

Habits aren't formed in a single day. Habits aren't changed in a single day. Some days you'll be spot on. Other days will be a struggle. Keep working at it. Keep focusing in on the changes you're attempting to make. Give yourself kudos, and mark your progress, when you succeed. Assess your shortcomings, and work through alternate plans, when you slip. But, don't give up! And, over time, you'll find yourself as a card-carrying member of Hijackers Anonymous!

The thoughts set out here are *simple*, but they're not necessarily *easy*. So, why don't you let **Executive Advantage** serve as trusted counsel for you?



Contact us today. We'd be honored to help you with the H-I-J-A-C-K steps set out here or in any other areas that may be limiting your professional and/or personal success.

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"[She] was sitting in a group of people, giving the monologue she always thought was conversation."
~Lillian Hellman

"[T]his is a good time to do a self-assessment."
~Scott Kahan

"We are extremely disappointed that a few individuals are attempting to hijack those discussions."
~Don Knauss

"Self-justification is a treacherous servant."
~Wellington Mara

"We don't give up. We don't quit."
~Mehmet Okur

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. You are the guy who'll decide where to go."
~Dr. Seuss

"Go not to the elves for counsel, for they will say both yes and no."
~J.R.R. Tolkien

"It's when things get rough and you don't quit that success comes."
~Unknown

"You can judge a good listener by asking the talker at the end of the conversation what the listener's position is on the topic. If the talker doesn't know, then the listener has probably done a good job of listening."
~Unknown

"That turned a two-way conversation into a one-way discussion."
~Rob Young

About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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